DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 408 852 FL 024 614

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TITLE Bidialectalism vis-a-vis Bilingualism, with Specific Reference to Black English (and Application to Early Reading).
PUB DATE Dec 73
NOTE 68p.; Course paper for University of Maryland Course EDHD-722.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Bidialectalism; *Bilingualism; Child Language; Classroom Techniques; Comparative Analysis; Contrastive Linguistics; Dialects; Elementary Education; Language Research; *Language Role; Language Usage; Linguistic Theory; North American English; Reading Instruction; *Standard Spoken Usage; Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

A discussion of bidialectalism looks at whether it is analogous to bilingualism, particularly in the case of young speakers of Black English, and how this and related considerations may inform reading instruction. Theory and research concerning dialects and bidialectalism, bilingualism and its various types, and linguistic competence and performance are reviewed briefly, and the theories of transformational grammar and language universals are applied comparatively to Black English and standard spoken English. Subsequently, issues in the teaching of standard English to speakers of other dialects are considered, drawing on relevant research literature concerning this and other bidialectal contexts. Four recommendations are made for reading instruction: (1) greater individualization in the approach to beginning reading to accommodate children's different degree and type of mismatch between standard usage and dialect; (2) recording and analysis of the informal speech of each child during the pre-reading phase; (3) teacher training to include some information about North American English dialects, sociolinguistics and language varieties, varied reading instruction techniques including some from second language instruction, and affective training concerning language varieties; and (4) use of recorded materials in which the child reads the text as he listens. Contains 89 references. (MSE)

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ED 408 852

BIDIALECTALISM VIS-A-VIS BILINGUALISM,
with Specific Reference to Black English
(and application to early reading)

BY DORA F. KENNEDY

EDHD 722
Professor John Eliot
December 1973
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FOREWORD

The writer wishes to emphasize that no portion of this paper should be construed as espousing a cultural deficit theory, that is, that cultural and linguistic differences constitute "inferiority," or that different learning patterns constitute "unteachability."

There is no evidence whatsoever, except faulty evidence of culturally biased tests, that the disadvantaged child has fewer concepts than the middle class child.

J. L. Dillard
Black English, page 288

Note: The term *Negro* appeared in references during the era of the writing of this paper, the 1970's.

...Dora F. Kennedy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

INTRODUCTION 1

Definitions 1

Psycholinguistics/sociolinguistics 2

Bidialectalism 3

Bilingualsim 5

Competence/Performance 6

BILINGUALISM/BIDIALECTALISM--A DISCUSSION 7

FUNCTIONAL TYPES OF BILINGUALISM 9

OTHER CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF BILINGUALISM 10

Swain's Models 11

Common Storage Models 11

TRANSFORMATION THEORY AND SECOND LANGUAGE/DIALECT . . 16

Summarizing Statement 20

ISSUES IN THE TEACHING OF BEGINNING READING 21

Samples of Linguistic Phenomena 21

Samples of varieties of American English 22

Reading 23

Possible Courses of Action 23

Black English as a "Foreign Language" 23

"A second Dialect is not a Foreign Language" 27

Prior teaching of Oral Standard 30

Children Read the Way they Speak 31

Neutralizing Dialect Differences 32

Experience Charts with Temporary Neutralization 36

Learning to Read While Learning the Standard 37

Companion Everyday Talk and School Talk Stories 39

SUMMARY OF APPROACHES 43

CONCLUSIONS 44

RECOMMENDATIONS 46

BIBLIOGRAPHY 48

APPENDIX . . . . . i-vii

Some Distinguishing Features of Black English

BIDIALECTALISM VIS-A-VIS BILINGUALISM, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO BLACK ENGLISH (and Application to Early Reading)

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this inquiry is not to investigate bilingualism per se, but to attempt to determine whether bidialectalism is to be considered analogous to bilingualism. Specifically this paper focuses on variety of American English call Black English, or Negro Nonstandard English, spoken by a significant number of Black Americans, particularly in the inner city. Many Black children enter school speaking this variety or dialect, a fact which has implications for the teaching of beginning reading. (Fasold & Shuy, 1970, pp. ix-xvi). The attempted resolution of this question, i.e., bidialectalism/bilingualism continues to involve linguists, psychologists, psycholinguists, sociolinguists; anthropologists, sociologists, and the teaching profession.

Definitions

The following key terms are defined at this juncture in order to set the stage for further elaboration in the pages which follow.

Psycho-linguistics/sociolinguistics

Psycholinguistics brings together the theoretical and empirical tools of both psychology and linguistics to study the mental processes underlying the acquisition and use of language (Slobin, 1971; Introduction).

The relatively new discipline of sociolinguistics "seeks to determine (among other things) who speaks what variety of what language, to whom, when, and concerning what" (Fishman, 1970, p. 2). As Fishman elaborates in his text (p. 4), sociolinguistics is concerned with the varieties of languages, characteristics of their functions, and of their speakers, as they constantly interact within a speech community. It represents the joining of linguistics and the social sciences.

Bidialectalism

The term dialect, as used in linguistics, means the collective linguistic patterns of a sub-group of the speakers of a language. Each individual speaker has his own idiolect, and a collection of idiolects is a dialect. There are several dialects of American English which are considered standard, that is, officially recognized as representing this country and its culture through various Communication Media (Dillard, 1972, p. 2).

Examples: Northern, Midland, and Southern (Francis, 1958 p. 511).

Most dialects designated as standard are geographic in origin. An example of one which is not is Network Standard English used by

announcers on national radio and television.

There are other dialects of American English which are considered nonstandard. Among these are the varieties spoken in Appalachia, Spanish-influenced English in the Southwest, Black English. Some nonstandard dialects are regional; others are social. A social dialect is not confined to a particular section of the country but appears to be characteristic of a particular group whose members may be located in various parts of the country. Black English is a social dialect. A social dialect is reinforced and strengthened when its speakers live apart from other groups in the society whether by design or by coercion (Fishman, 1970, pp. 21-28).

Some nonstandard dialects are more stigmatized by the society at large than others.

Since the term dialect carries a heavy pejorative connotation these days (Fasold & Shuy, p. xi), the word variety is being used to refer to Black English particularly. Variety is a designation for something between a language and idiolect, a relatively neutral term (Dillard, 1972, p. 304; and Fishman, 1970, p. 23).[1]

Bidialectalism has been suggested as a way of identifying a person's right to continue speaking the dialect of his home (which may be nonstandard) even after he has learned a standard dialect

---

1. In this paper the writer will continue to use the word dialect as it is used in linguistics, that is, nonjudgmentally.

in school (Fasold & Shuy, p. xi). It also may refer to the following situation:

Pre-schoolers or children entering school who have been speaking a variety of English which differs significantly from that outside the home or that of the school, have nevertheless some degree of passive knowledge or comprehension of the latter, since they have been exposed to it in various ways, e. g., television. This is sometimes called receptive competence (Troike, 1969, pp. 63-73), and (Bailey, 1970, p. 9). These children posses a degree of bidialectalism[2], according to Bailey (p. 9). However, this argument is refuted by Stewart (1970, p. 8). Nevertheless this writer has observed informally Black kindergarten and first grade children who understood the spoken standard, although they themselves spoke in their dialect.

The use of the term bidialectalism in this paper, then, can be applied to both the situation in which it is the target variety that is, the speaker of nonstandard is to learn standard, thus controlling two dialects; and to the notion that many children who speak a nonstandard variety have some degree of control over the standard, at least in comprehension; thus they are bidialectal upon entering school.

---

2. The term biloquialism has been recently coined by linguists as a suggested replacement for bidialectalism because of the stigmatization of the term dialect among the lay public. (Fasold & Shuy, 1970, p. xi). Also some school systems avoid the use of the term dialect preferring the expression, a language difference e. g., Prince George's County, Maryland.

Bilingualism

Bilingualism cannot be explained simply as control of two language systems or codes by the same individual. The nature of one's bilingualism is affected by how it was acquired and in what type of situational context it is functioning.

Bilingualism may be acquired by:

(1) being naturally or deliberately exposed to more than one language in the home [3]

(2) being required to function in one code at home and another in school or community

(3) studying foreign languages or living in a foreign country

Fishmann (1966, p. 123) points out that nearly everyone can be said to be "bilingual" in the sense that he masters different "registers" appropriate to home, school, church, office, in other words, the domain spoken of by sociolinguists. Hence, Fishman implies that bilingualism could possibly encompass the notion of different varieties of the same language. Thus bidialectalism can be considered a manifestation of bilingualism, if Fishman's line of reasoning is followed.

---

3. Example of a natural bilingual situation is a home in which both English and Spanish are spoken. There are many such homes among the Latin American population in our large cities and suburbs. A bilingual situation may be deliberately created in the home by engaging a foreign speaking individual to care for a child. This individual speaks to the child only in the foreign language.

Competence/Performance

In the transformational theory of language, first set forth by Chomsky primarily, (1959, 1965, 1966), competence refers to the underlying system of rules of a language, which a person must posses in order to produce utterances-phrases, expressions, sentences (Slobin, p. 6, 7). These utterances, which are "surface manifestations," are produced as a result of a series of transformations, going from the deep structures of the competence level to surface structure of the performance level. Thus performance is the outward, verbal behavior, which cannot take place without the existence of the competence level. From the underlying structures the human being can produce not only utterances he has previously heard, but he can also generate new utterances (new to him). Thus the term generative grammar. To illustrate the fact that similar surface structures may stem from distinct underlying structure Chomsky gives examples such as: John is eager to please vs. John is easy to please (Slobin, p. 5). Other examples are gloves were made by tailors and gloves were made by hand (Slobin, p. 30).

According to Chomsky the human being is equipped with innate knowledge about linguistic structure in general, and on the basis of this innate knowledge he constructs a theory that accounts for the utterances he hears around him; he then proceeds to apply this theory to the further interpretation and construction of utterances.

This process, which Chomsky applies only to first language acquisition, has now been extended to second language acquisition (Scott, 1969, p. 81). Thus, the learner of a second language, must go through the stage involving the acquisition of knowledge about utterances of the target language, i. e., the construction of a theory about these utterances. Once he has built this theory, wholly or partially, he would apply it to construction and interpretation of utterances of the target language (Scott, 1969, p. 81).

The relevance of this hypothesis to second dialect acquisition is discussed later in this paper.

BILINGUALISM/BIDIALECTALISM--A DISCUSSION

In addition to domain, some other aspects of bilingualism which have been investigated are degree and functional types.

Control of a language or of a language variety (or dialect of that language) implies control of its sounds (phonology), forms (morphology), syntax, and lexicon (vocabulary), within the various skills of comprehension, speaking (production), reading and writing. The degree of an individual's bilingualism will rarely be the same in all these skills or roles, as Fishman calls them (1966, p. 125). Nor will it be the same for formality levels, e.g., casual, formal, etc., nor in different domains of social interaction. Furthermore, the term bilingual communities should not convey the notion that such communities are characterized by all bilingual persons necessarily; in such communities are also found "monolinguals" in each language.

For purposes of this discussion the terms bilingualism/bidialectalism are examined as phenomena in individuals, not in linguistic communities.

In keeping with the assertion that an individual's bilingualism will rarely be the same in all language skills, Troike (1969, p. 63-73) concluded that receptive competence is not the same as productive competence, for example. He reports a study in which Negro children and white Appalachian children were asked to repeat a sentence they heard on tape while watching a coordinated language filmstrip:

EXAMPLE

N indicates Negro

A indicates Appalachian white

Model	Response
Mother helps Gloria.	Mother help Gloria. (N)
Gloria has a toothbrush.	Gloria have a toothbrush. (N)
She has soap on her head.	She has soap(t) on hers head. (A)
The children go to bed.	The children goes to bed. (A)

Troike points out that these children posses receptive competence in standard English, but not productive competence (p. 66). He theorizes that they have decoded the stimulus and re-encoded it in the form they might have used in framing the original sentence. He found analogous examples in interviewing Spanish-speaking first graders, i.e., their English receptive competence was better than their English productive competence.

They understood the English sentences but they substituted

some Spanish words when asked to repeat them.

In assessing degree of bilingualism psychologists usually have in mind rapidity of response, sociologists, frequency of use, and educators, size of repertoire. Linguists also consider whether there is interference between one language and another (Fishman, 1966, p. 126-127). Theoretically, an individual could be equally skilled in both languages; such an individual is designated as a balanced bilingual. In most cases, however, one or the other language is dominant (Peal and Lambert, 1962, p. 8). The attitude the society has toward a language affects dominance (Peal and Lambert, p. 9, 17).

In addition to considerations of degree (balance), there is the aspect of bilingual functioning called compound/coordinate.

FUNCTIONAL TYPES OF BILINGUALISM

The compound bilingual is said to have a single meaning system hooked up to two different input (decoding) and output (encoding) channels corresponding to the bilingual's two languages. It has been assumed that this type of bilingualism is the result of learning the second language using the first language as the indirect channel of acquisition (Jackabovits, 1968, p. 29). Lambert states that a compound bilingual learned both languages in the same setting, and has the same referents for both languages. He can easily switch from one to the other (Peal and Lambert, 1962, p. 14, 15).

The coordinate bilingual on the other hand, is said to possess two independent systems corresponding to his two languages (Jacko-

bovits, 1968, p. 29).

OTHER CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF BILINGUALISM

The theory of compound/coordinate bilingual functioning has not been entirely acceptable to all linguists and psychologists. Fishman (1966, p. 128) states that such an equation is not justified since most bilinguals manifest both compound and coordinate functioning from minute to minute, from topic to topic . . . (See also Haugen, 1970, p. 5, and Di Pietro, 1970, p. 15). Swain (1971) in a mimeographed paper sent to the writer, proposes a common storage model (p. 5, 7, 14) as a way of conceptualizing the phenomenon of bilingualism/bidialectalism. He maintains that it does not matter whether it involves more than one language (code) or more than one variety of the same language. He reminds the reader that most members of communities control several varieties of their language (p. 2). It should be stated that Swain is concerned with simultaneous acquisition of different codes in early childhood. Swain's schema, reproduced below, has great appeal in the writer's opinion particularly if one considers the individual who controls more than two languages. The notion that a "coordinate bilingual" could possess as many independent language systems as the number of languages he controls seems rather simplistic and inefficent, according to Swain (1971, p. 6). For this reason the writer finds Swain's model more attractive.[4]

4. Swain's work is being carried out with children acquiring two languages simulatenously in bilingual communities of French Canada.

Swain's Models

Letters in box refer to examples of rules governing a language (code). See no. 8 under Elaboration. Each rule marked with subscript according to its code.

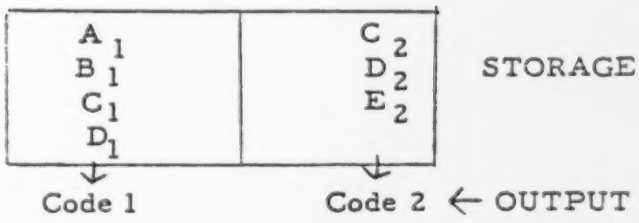


Figure 1 (Swain, 1971, p. 7)

Separate Storage Model

vs.

Letters in box refer to examples of rules governing a language (code). See no. 9 under Elaboration. Only rules specific to a code are marked with subscript

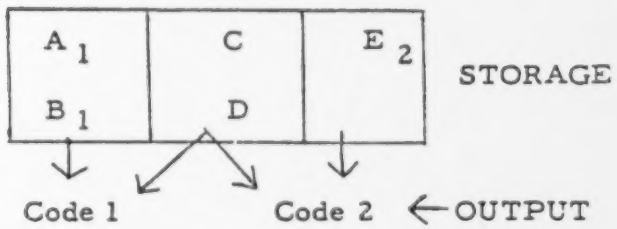


Figure 2 (Swain, 1971, p. 7)

Common Storage Model

Elaboration of Swain's hypothesis

1. Code denotes any linguistic system used for interpersonal communition.
2. Its various levels of structure -- semantic, grammatical, and phonol ogical -- interact in rule-governed manner.
3. Languages, dialects, varieties of dialects are all examples of codes.
4. Code-switching constitutes a speaker's substitution of one

language, dialect, variety for another.

5. The term bilingual and monolinguial may have lost their meaning in this context since code-switching is a normal part of all linguistic activity. To distinguish between a person who controls more than one language and one who controls more than one dialect or variety of a dialect may not be psychologically meaningful.

6. Children acquiring two languages or two varieties simultaneously pass through a "mixed-speech" stage; their sentences include elements of both codes.[5]

7. A process of differentiation and rule development follows the initial mixed-code stage.

8. The separate storage model in Figure 1 postulates that if Rules C and D, for example, are needed for output in both codes or languages, each rule is stored in two separate locations. Swain maintains that such memory storage would be quite inefficient (1971, p. 6).

9. In the common storage model preferred by Swain a rule common to both codes may be acquired only once. Some rules considered to be common may be later differentiated to only one of the codes or the other.

---

5. The writer observed this phenomenom in her own youngster who was provided with a Spanish-speaking nurse in order that he might be exposed to a second language from birth.

In one of Swain's studies which contributed to the formulation of the hypothesis of the common storage model he recorded over a period of six to eight months the speech of four children who had heard English and French from birth. Specifically he addressed the problem of how the children learned to formulate yes/no questions.

Example: If the child wants to ask his mother if his friend is coming over. (Swain, 1971, p. 8). He could utter one of the following nine questions:

1. He's coming?
2. Il vient?
3. Est-ce qu'il vient?
4. Il vient ti? (ti is used in questions after the verb in one variety of Canadian French.)
5. He's coming, eh?
6. Il vient, eh?
7. He's coming, isn't he?
8. Is he coming?
9. Vient-il? (or, Jean vient-il?)

The n'est-ce pas form is not usually used by French Canadians, though common in France. Hence, the alternative, Il vient, n'est-ce pas? was omitted from consideration by Swain.

Faced with the above array of alternatives to learn, what does the child do? The speech samples recorded by Swain over a period of time led to the following conclusions:

A developmental pattern emerges in the use of devices to signal yes/no questions irrespective of code, thus:

(1) Intonation and the question morpheme "eh" are the first devices to be used.

(2) Special purpose question particle like ti , then est-ce que are second.

(3) Third, the rearrangement of constituents within the sentence.

These results appear to support the common storage model in code acquisition. The writer cautions the reader, however, that Swain's concern is exclusively the situation involving the simultaneous acquisition of several codes. He does not speak to problem of learning a second code after the child's first language acquisition period has ~~past,~~ passed, although other linguists have, as quoted previously in this paper (Scott, 1969, p. 81). Nor does he refer at any point to the learning of two codes in two separate contexts or situations, such as at home and at nursery school, for example. Swain's hypothesis does not appear to be out of phase with Chomskyan notions, for in Chomskyan terms languages tend to resemble each other in their deep structures (Scott, 1969, p. 83). Bach also maintains that the deep structures of sentences in different languages are identical, that there is a universal set of base rules (Bach, 1968, p. 91).

Nevertheless, total agreement does not exist among linguists, psycholinguists and psychologists concerning notions of universal

grammar. Perhaps it is a matter of "how deep is deep." As Scott points out (p. 83), Bach's "deep structure" may be at a deeper level than the so-called "underlying structures." Wilga Rivers, in her essay on cognitive psychology and foreign language teachers, reminds teachers that reputable linguistis, philosophers. and psychologists have criticized Chomsky's views (Rivers, 1972, p. 10). For example, Pulgram argues (1971, p. 475) that the surface structure is all the evidence that the linguist has at his disposal; and that therefore he must derive, not the surface structure from the deep structure, but the deep structure from the surface structure. The operations connecting the two really issue from the surface structure even though they may eventually be read in the opposite direction. All else is merely in the mind of the linguist, in this case, Chomsky's mind.

The question seems to be not whether there is an innate faculty but how much is innate (Rivers, p. 10). This question is directly related to the notion of universal grammar, postulated by Chomsky as the "innate theory of language possessed by every human."

The present consensus appears to be that it is the logical structures basic to various intellectual processes which are innate, not language-specific structures. These logical structures make it possible for man to acquire language and to perform other cognitive operations. Thus the concept of "noun phrase" or "sentence" are not innate, but rather it is the capacity to categorize and to establish

hierarchies of categories (Rivers, p. 11). Bruner (1966, p. 43) maintains that "in the linguistic domain the capacities for categorization and hierarchical organization are innate, and so too are predication, causation, and modification." Also it is generally agreed by psychologists that children perceive order relations, temporal position and co-occurrence relations (Rivers, p. 11). Within the context of cognitive processes, "universal grammar," then, is viewed as having to do with the mechanisms of perception, learning, and cognition; hence, there is not much innate structure to language if the universal grammar is stripped of these psychological mechanisms, (Bever, 1970, p. 352).

Transformational Theory and Second Language/Dialect

Scott speculates that at some intermediate level of deep structure languages differ significantly in their deep structure constituents (p. 83), assuming that at the deepest level (i.e., universal grammar level) they are similar, since the factors involved are more psychological than linguistic. (See discussion above.) Contrastive analysis of languages should be carried out at an intermediate level of deep structures rather than at the level of surface structure. This may be the level at which interference takes place when two languages are "in contact" in the same individual.

Applying these premises to a dialect or variety of a language: According to transformational-generative theory, regional dialect

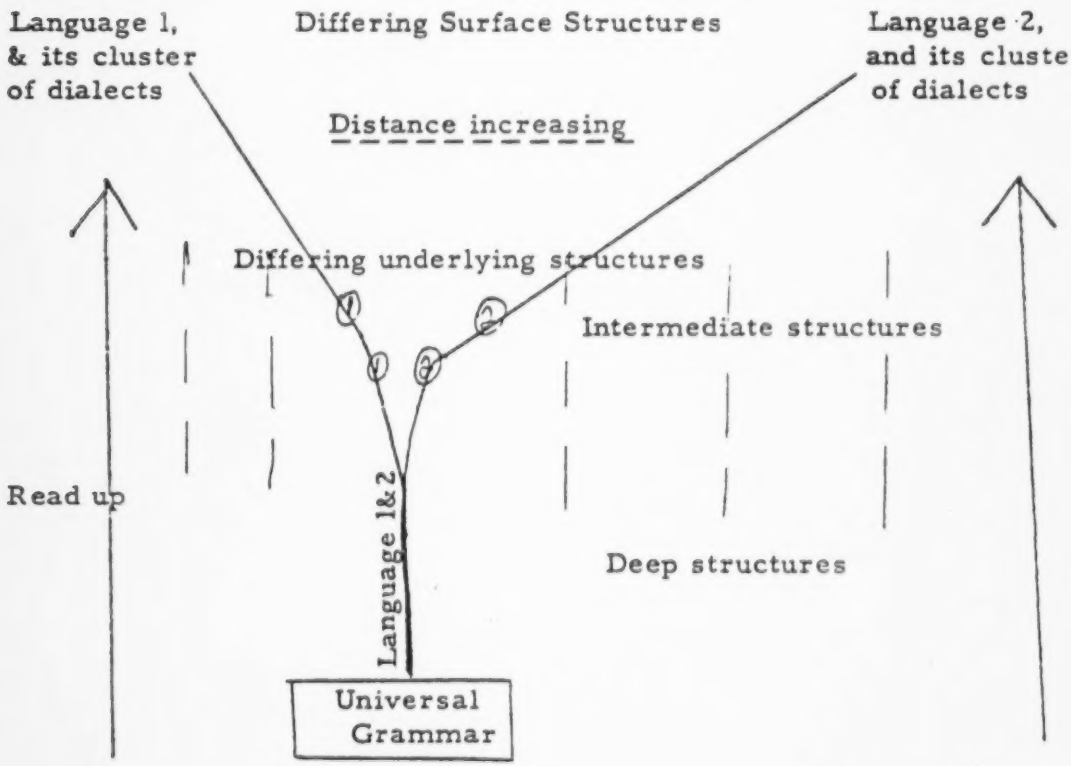
differences may be accounted for by minor differences in low-level transformational rules, especially those having to do with phonology, which is usually at the level of surface realization. (Scott, 1969, p. 84) Scott further maintains that although these assumptions about dialect may be justified, this may not be the case with the Black English variety of American English (p. 84). Scott refers to Loflin's investigations (Scott, p. 85) in which Loflin maintains that the verb system of the most common variety of Black American English differs considerably from that of the Standard, points which support the notion that the differences are not confined to "phonological realization of surface phenomena." It is maintained that the differences between Black American English and Standard American is greater than that between Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian. Hence, even sociolinguistically, the line between "standard" language and "dialect" is not clearly drawn, but depends on geographic and/or social factors.

Loflin himself, in an article entitled "Negro Nonstandard and Standard English," asserts that a major goal in dialect investigation is to determine the level on which dialects differ from one another. To date there has been no transformational research to speak of in syntatic dialectology-----(Loflin, 1969, p. 75).

Whereas it is generally agreed that regional dialects of American English are similar to Standard in underlying structure, there is controversy as to whether this is the case with the social

dialect, Black English. Loflin, (pp. 74, 75, 76) claims that a significant number of the deep structures of Black English differ phonologically and syntactically. Fasold (1969, pp. 236, 237) states confidently that most of the "gross differences" between Black English and Standard English have been shown to be relatively superficial. Although these contentions may appear trivial to the reader at first glance, the philosophical position taken by educators vis-à-vis this matter has influenced the recommendation for teaching the bidialectal child to read. Writer's schemas reflecting conceptualization of transformation theory and second language/dialect follow.

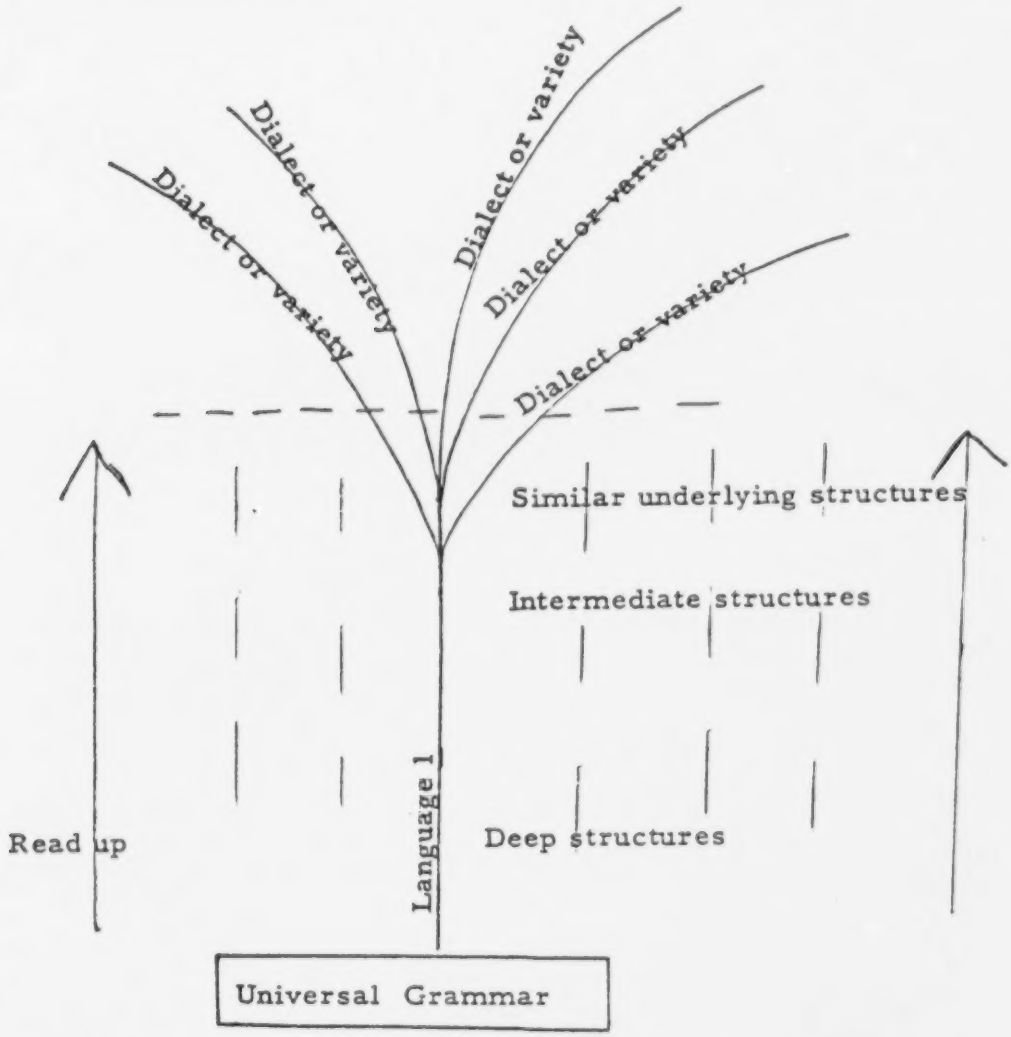
Writer's Concept of Transformation Theory and a Second Language*



"Languages resemble each other in their deep structures." Distance between languages increases as surface phenomena are approached.
*According to Loflin (1969, p. 74) and Dillard (1972, p. 272) the dialect, Black American English and its variations would be viewed as Language 2, that is, as a separate language for purposes of this schema.

Writer's concept of Transformation Theory and one language with its variations*

Somewhat differing surface features
(Distances between varieties smaller than between Language 1 and a foreign language)



"Regional and most social dialects of a language differ from one another only in surface structure----" (Scott, 1969, pp. 84, 85).

*This representation would not include the social dialect Black American English for those who view the latter as differing from Standard in at least part of its underlying structures. (See Schema immediately preceding.)

Bilingualism/Bidialectalism: A Summarizing Statement

The weight of psycholinguistic opinion seems to point in the direction of viewing bilingualism and bidialectalism as manifestations of the same phenomenon. However, political, sociolinguistic and learning factors militate against this view when dealing with the bidialectal child in school in contrast with the bilingual child. Stewart states that the fact that so many speakers of nonstandard dialects of American English are Negroes introduces a whole host of attitudinal complications in both the theoretical and applied sides of what is already a technically complicated area . . . The total effect has been to warp linguistic objectivity in Negro dialect research . . . (1969, p. 216). It is this writer's opinion, derived from both experience and observation, that in no culture will a socially stigmatized variety of the language be granted the same favored status as an internationally recognized foreign language. Nancy Modiano in "Where Are the Children?" (1969, p. 93) makes much the same point. The Black middle class does not wish Black English to be perpetuated (Raspberry, 1970), whereas the Spanish-speaking groups are insisting that their children be given bilingual, bicultural programs in order that they may preserve their Spanish language and heritage, while acquiring English.

The middle class Black American is in favor of teaching the African heritage, various African languages, and the contributions of Black people to the history of the United States;

however, the establishment of bidialectal programs in the same vein as bilingual programs is defeated by political complications, i.e., by the Black view that bidialectal programs are yet another device for insuring the educational, economic, and political inferiority of the race. Consequently the linguistic needs of the Black child cannot be approached in a truly objective fashion in school, at this time (Modiano, 1969, p. 94).

The following section of this paper is concerned with issues in teaching reading in standard English to speakers of other dialects of the language.

ISSUES IN THE TEACHING OF BEGINNING READING IN A DIALECT OTHER THAN THAT OF THE LEARNER

Samples of Linguistic Phenomena

Below are given a sample of bilingual and bidialectal phenomena; the third sample contrasts four varieties of American English.

1. French Canada (bilingual): The Island of the Blue Dolphins était mon foyer. Je n'en avais no other. It would be my home jusqu'an jour oú les hommes blancs returned in their ship. . . . . I would have construire une maison. Mais oú? [6]

6. From St. Lambert Elementary School - Bilingual Project, begun in 1966, in which a group of children from English-speaking homes in Montreal attended kindergarten through Grade 6, a school in which French was the major medium of instruction from the very beginning. The children could speak no French on entering kindergarten. (Lambert, 1973, p. 89; and 1970, p. 229).

2. Black English (bidialectal): I can skate better than Louis and I be only eight. If you be goin' real fast, hold it. .... That man he a clip you up.... An' so I comin' down and' she out there babblin' her mouth told her sister I was playin' hooky from school (Dillard, 1972, p. 4).

Are the above two manifestations psycholinguistically similar but sociolinguistically different? The writer would answer this question in the affirmative in the light of the previous discussion in this paper.

Samples of varieties of American English: (Maelstrom, 1969, p. 168)

Standard English: We were eating and drinking too.

White nonstandard: We was eatin' and drinkin' too.

Black nonstandard: We was eatin'--an' drinkin' too.

Gullah[7]: We bin dah nyam--en' we duh drink, too.

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7. Gullah: A variety of American English spoken on the Sea Islands off Georgia and South Carolina. It is related to Caribbean and West African varieties of English, and not to the regional dialects of Great Britain, as some have attempted to prove. Like the West Indies varieties, American Black English can be traced to a creolized version based on a pidgin spoken by slaves (Dillard, 1972, p. 6).

Pidgin (Dillard, p. 303) refers to a language which has no native speakers. It is coined by groups of people of different linguistic backgrounds in order to communicate especially in trade. It eliminates unusual features which speakers of a number of languages would find difficult. Any native languages can be used as basis for pidgin. The most common are pidgin English, pidgin French, and historically, pidgin Portuguese. The word pidgin is said to be the Chinese pronunciation of the word business.

Creole: (from Spanish criollo) refers to a language which was a pidgin but which later became the language of a speech community, as children born into that speech community acquire that language as their mother tongue. Examples of Creoles in the Caribbean are Haitian French and varities of Jamaican English (Dillard, 1972, p. 300).

Reading

This discussion is not concerned with the complex topic of teaching reading but rather with the issues which emerge when the focus is upon the actual language or variety of language spoken by the learner.

In addition to the important visual perception factors, the pivotal element in reading is mastery of the sound-graphic symbol relationship.

It has been said that in reading, the gap must be bridged in the mind of the reader between the sequence of sounds in time and the sequence of letters in space.

Paul McKee, one of the leading authorities on reading, wrote: ..."any piece of reading matter, small or large, is printed talk in the sense that it stands for sounds which the writer thought as he wrote the lines and which he would probably make in speaking the lines....." (1969, p. 25).

The question might be asked, then: What if the reader is unfamiliar with the sounds which the writer of the passage thought?

Possible courses of action: (Black English as a "Foreign Language")

Children entering school come from a variety of socio-cultural backgrounds, speaking different dialects of English, some standard, some nonstandard. Not all Black children speak Black English, but for those who do, the task of learning to read in Standard may be more difficult than for those who speak other dialects because

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the distance between their variety of English and the standard variety is greater than that between other dialects and the standard dialect, according to some linguists.

It must be emphasized here that children learn to use the resources of a self-contained linguistic system during their preschool years, regardless of intelligence, socio-economic factors or ethnic background, and regardless of whether the language system is considered to be standard or nonstandard. It must also be emphasized that no linguistic system is inherently superior to any other (Gordon, 1969, p. 149). Hence, the language of the speaker of nonstandard is not inferior, but rather, different. Reed reminds one (1969, p. 95) that each speaker of a language has his own slightly different version, his idiolect. Hence, there is some degree of distance between the idiolect of every child and the language variety he is to learn to read. However, according to Baratz (1969), Stewart (1969), Loflin (1969), and others, Black English is sufficiently different from Standard as to require the use of "dialect primers," i. e., reading matter in Black English as transitional material to bridge the gap between the learner's dialect and the standard dialect. Black English contains elements of West African languages in addition to Creole influences, and its verb system differs from the standard. According to this school of thought, Black English differs sufficiently in the basic components of phonology, syntax, and lexicon that it should be viewed as a foreigh language for purposes of teaching children

to read Standard. In a telephone conversation with the writer, Joan Baratz who is at the Education Study Center in Washington, D. C., expressed her very keen disappointment in the fact that the three experimental readers which she and Dr. Stewart produced are not being tried anywhere because of the rejection of dialect texts by the Black Community.[8] Thus the principle that the child should begin reading with materials of the language he speaks goes untested with respect to dialect. It has generally been accepted throughout the world that the child should learn to read first in his mother tongue. Ms. Baratz stated that in 1953 UNESCO recommended to all countries that beginning reading be taught to children in the vernacular of the child's linguistic community. This matter is highly controversial with respect to nonstandard dialect, particularly if the dialect is stigmatized by the society at large in that country.

Irrespective of stigmatization, Dr. Quinting, a psycholinguist at Georgetown University, stated in a telephone interview:

> The question is whether it is easier for the child to engage in transfer learning--going from dialectal reader to standard than to learn to read directly in standard, while speaking a different variety than that in the reader. This question has never been researched.

Research does exist (Modiano, p. 170) favoring to some degree the introduction of reading in the child's mother tongue in the case of the child who speaks a language other than the school language on

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8. Book titles: Ollie, Friends, and Old Tales, produced in parallel Black and Standard English versions, (Dillard, 1972, p. 283).

entering first grade (for example, the Chicano child who has been speaking Spanish most of his life). A recent example are the bilingual elementary schools of Dade County, Florida, such as Coral Way Elementary School, established to meet the needs of hundreds of Cuban refugee children in the early and middle 1960's (Gaarder, pp. 34 and 171).

Venezky (1970, p. 336) cautions, however, that none of the major studies shows unequivocally superior results for the native literacy approach.

Success has apparently been achieved in such projects as the St. Lambert's Elementary School in Montreal in which English-Mother-Tongue children were taught to read in French. (See footnoot 6 of this paper) The results of this project might be viewed as contradictory to the principle of "beginning reading in the mother tongue." However, Dr. Lambert (1970) upon being posed this question pointed out that from the first day of school in the kindergarten the children hear only French. By the time reading is formally begun, some time in first grade, the children are fluent in French. It is not as if they were being taught to read a language they do not speak. Further, the sociolinguistic factors of dominant group and dominant language in the society must be considered. The English-speaking Canadian children represent the dominant language and dominant group in Canadian society. They possess a strong self-identity. Dr. Lambert does not feel that the same

glowing results would ensue if French-speaking Canadian children were placed in an English school milieu, or when Chicano children are placed in the English-speaking public school. In the latter cases the dominant language is being taught to a nondominant group (Campbell, p. 310).

The foregoing discussion has presented the point of view of those who consider Black English sufficiently different from standard as to require a foreign language approach to the teaching of beginning reading in Standard. It might be stated that these individuals believe that the bilingual child and the bidialectal child (at least the child who speaks Black English) have analogous language needs. Thus they advocate the use of dialect primers. There are linguists and language arts and English teachers who disagree with this assessment.

Possible courses of action: ("A second dialect is not a foreign language"

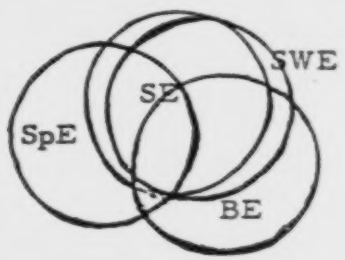
Walt Wolfram, Center for Applied Linguistics, makes the following comments on Black English in a mimeographed report dated February, 1970, pages 2 and 3:

> There are two possible reasons for the distinctiveness of Black English. In the first place the linguistic history of Black English is partly independent of the history of the rest of American English. It has been postulated that several of the features are traceable to African languages via the Caribbean Creole languages. . . . Even if this is not the case, however, the persistent segregation patterns of our society are sufficient cause for this dialect to develop its own character. . . . The social distance between white and black Americans is a significant factor in the development and maintenance of distinct dialect features.

* * * *

> Black English shares many features with other dialects of American English but it is not identical with them. I am reacting against claims that, on the one hand, insist that this dialect is a completely different language, and, on the other hand, claims that it is identical with other southern dialects of American English. (See Wolfram, Feb. 1970, Bibliography.)

Wolfram, then, views Black English as overlapping with other dialects of English, including Standard. He illustrates this diagrammatically thus: (Feb., 1970, p. 4)



SE = Standard English
BE = Black English
SWE = Southern White English
SpE = Spanish-influenced English
Many other varieties could be included.

If the child is to learn to read in the standard dialect though he speaks one of the others, obviously there will be some problems of reconciliation. The basic question on which linguists disagree is how far removed from the child's actual speech reading materials must be to have a significantly adverse impact (Wolfram, 1971, p. 15). Gibson states that fairly expert perception of speech is essential before one can begin learning to decode another symbol system to it (1969, p. 433). She also points out that the child must not only comprehend the meaning of a spoken message; he must be able to

perceive its segmentation and its combinatory order. These abilities she classifies as subskills prerequisite to learning to read.

Obviously the child does perceive the segmentation and combinatory order of whatever language happens to be his mother tongue. The question may be asked, "Does he possess this perception in the case of another variety of his mother tongue?" According to Wolfram, (see foregoing discussion) he does, because of the overlapping feature. Other linguists, language arts specialists, and anthropologists who share this view are Troike (1969, pp.98,99); Bailey (1970, p.8); Shuy(1971, p.39); and Goodman (1969, p.27). These investigators do not believe that bidialectalism should be approached in the same manner as bilingualism with regard to initial reading instruction. They stress the fact that the speaker of one dialect of the language has a receptive competence in the Standard since in various aspects of his environment he is exposed to it. Most children who speak Black English understand a good part of Standard.

In the meaning aspect of learning to read the child must learn to re-create the deep structure, the total meaning, from the surface structure, that is, from the actual words on the page. He has already acquired considerable skill in doing this in listening (Wardhaugh, p.4). In other words he must transfer receptive competence to reading.

In contrast to those who propose the use of "dialect readers," e.g., Baratz, those who maintain that a second dialect is not analogous to a foreign language offer a variety of suggestions for approaching the problem of initial reading. These have been summarized by Wolfram (Fall, 1970) as presented below.

Prior teaching of oral Standard:

Bailey (1970) and Venezky (1970), among others, advocate the teaching of oral Standard English prior to introducing the child to reading. This is not to imply that the children are linguistically deficient, as some educators believe. Rather, the purpose would be to help the learner achieve a degree of productive competence in the variety of English used in the standard reader. Nor would the purpose be to eradicate the child's own dialect. Wolfram warns, however (p. 3), that because of the operation of social forces in the use of language -- forces only poorly understood -- it may not be possible to teach Standard to nonstandard speaking primary children unless they are interacting with standard English speakers in a meaningful way outside the classroom. Although they do possess receptive competence, they may see no need for productive (speaking) competence in Standard at the age of five or six.

Roger Shuy (1971, p. 54) sheds more light on this matter as he expresses the view of sociolinguists that nonstandard speech represents a culturally patterned difference rather than a deviation from a norm.

The entire process of second dialect learning, he contends, has proved to be a very difficult thing to describe psychologically, socially, and linguistically" (p. 55). Even in second language learning it is known that interference from similarity is not the same phenomenon as interference from difference (p. 31). When the dialect which the child is attempting to learn to speak resembles his own very closely it is difficult for him to distinguish between them. This problem does not exist with respect to the listening skill, nor would it exist with respect to reading.

In contrast to Venezky, Bailey advocates stressing oral work throughout the early grades, and the development of special techniques in which oral work and reading would complement each other (1970, p2).

Children read the way they speak:

Goodman's position is that children should be permitted, actually encouraged, to read the way they speak (Wolfram, p. 5). No special materials need be created. If a child reads a passage in such a way that his rendition systematically differs from standard English where his indigenous dialect differs, he has successfully read the passage:

> Example: If a Black English speaker reads a Standard sentence, "Jane goes to Mary's house" as "Jane go to Mary house" he is considered to have read it properly, since the absence of the third person singular -- s and of possessive -- s are characteristic of this particular dialect of English.[9] This approach requires that the

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9. For purposes of clarification, Goodman does not imply that the child should not be taught Standard English as a second dialect at some point in his schooling. The concern in the above presentation is that it should not be done in the initial stages of learning to read.

the teacher develop a receptive competence in the dialect of the child. In fact, the conclusion is inescapable that the teacher of beginning reading must be familiar with the dialects of the children in his class. Otherwise, there is no way of distinguishing legitimate reading problems arising from an incomplete mastery of the sound-symbol relationships and reading differences which are the result of dialect interference.

Examples:

Reading "thought" as "fought"

This is not dialect interference for the speaker of Black English since this dialect does not render th as (f) in word-initial position.

Reading "Ruth" as "roof"

This may be a legitimate dialect pronunciation since Black English renders th as (f) in the middle or end of a word (Goodman, 1969).

Wolfram concludes (Feb. 1970, p. 6) that the teacher who thoroughly acquaints himself with the description of the dialect features and is convinced of the legitimacy of the dialect as a highly developed language system is in a position to start initiating this alternative.[10]

(See Appendix for list of main distinguishing features of Black English.)

Neutralizing dialect differences:

Shuy (1969, pp. 117-37) advocates the development of what might be called grammatically "neutralized" materials. This alternative assumes that there is a sufficient "common core" between the standard and nonstandard language systems. In other words, it capitalizes

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10. There may be objections to this approach on the part of some Black parents who do not wish the teacher to "reinforce" nonstandard dialect.

on the presumed similarities of large portions of the grammar of both dialects, thus taking the fullest possible advantage of the child's receptive competence in Standard. It avoids features which reflect serious differences between the dialects.

Shuy's position represents a middle ground between full dialect readers and those who would attempt to teach the child oral standard prior to introducing them to reading.

This approach has great merit, in the writer's opinion. Of course, primers of this type would be intended as transitional, in the same manner as full-fledged dialect readers. The question arises as to whether the differences between the dialects would be such that it would be difficult to incorporate this type of change into materials. Wolfram points out that the inventory of simularities is certainly greater than the inventory of differences. Hence, it may not be impossible to produce such neutralized transitional readers (p. 7).

Below are sample constructions listed in an inventory of features of Black English, and the changes suggested for neutralizing the grammatical differences.

1) Possession: Standard: John's bike
Black English: John bike

A sentence such as "John's bike is bigger than Mary's" might be restructured thus, in order to avoid the possessive -- 's: "The bike John has is bigger than the one Mary has." (Shuy, 1969, p. 128).

2) Copula:

In the restructured sentence above, the problem of the copula arises. Black English does not use the copula in the present tense (e.g., "He big.")[11] Wolfram (p. 8) argues that eliminating structures calling for copulas in order to neutralize the material may be too restrictive, thus severely limiting the possibilities for meaningful narrative. He suggests that the full form of the copula be used, and not contracted forms. ("He is big," not, "He's big.") The latter is not part of Black English, whereas the former may be part of its underlying structures, since the copula is used in the past tense: "He was big." It is also used in the present for emphasis. Example" "He ain't big." "He is so."

3) Past conditional embedded question:

Standard: He asked if he could come.

Black English: He asked could he come.

In order to avoid conflict this type of structures can be changed to direct questions in initial reading materials. He asked, "Can I come?"

The few examples given above are perhaps sufficient to show that the feasibility of neutralization varies from feature to feature. In order to take advantage of this strategy as a "bridge to literacy" Wolfram (p. 9) suggests that materials developers need not be

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11. Russian is an example of a language which does not employ the copula in the present tense. "He big" is standard in Russian. Lack of copula is not in itself a sign of linguistic or conceptual underdevelopment.

unusually rigorous. One might avoid certain types of grammatical differences while leaving others intact. For example, the use of embedded questions might be avoided since they involve a change of word order from Black English to Standard or vice versa, but certain plurals, possessives, or the third person singular present tense of certain verbs would be included in the reading material. This compromise would reduce some of the problems caused by trying to eliminate frequently occurring inflectional forms. In other words, what is advocated is a modification of the neutralization process so that only the most salient differences would be eliminated. Further, this strategy avoids the unpopular codification of nonstandard patterns which would be the case in the use of dialect readers (Wolfram, fall, 1970, p. 10).

The writer consulted Dr. Shuy recently at the Department of Sociolinguistics, Georgetown University, in order to ascertain whether any neutralized reading series had in fact been produced. He stated that unfortunately no such series has yet been produced. The Ginn Series, Reading--360[12] attempts to avoid phonological problems, such as pin -- pen, for example, which are pronounced as pin in both Black English and white nonstandard. However, no attempt has been made to neutralize structure in this series.

He mentioned the newly published work, Language Differences--Do They Interfere? edited by Shuy and Laffey. (See Bibliography)

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12. Reading -- 360: Ginn and Company: Arlington, Va., 1911 North Fort Myer Drive, 22209.

This work is intended as a description of the state of the art. It contains a section which treats neutralization in detail. (Seymour, pp. 149-163). Dr. Shuy commented that, unfortunately, few school systems throughout the country are experimenting with strategies for dealing with dialect differences in relation to teaching children to read, one reason being the curtailment of research funds.

Experience charts with temporary neutralization:

Dorothy Seymour (Feb. 1973, p. 64) advocates experience charts as the most promising approach to initial reading instruction, with gradual transition into printed reading materials. She would also utilize temporary neutralization of classroom exercises and reading tests.

The use of experience charts (children relate an experience they have had while the teacher records these sentences on large sheets) enables the teacher to record the pupils' own language, with its own grammar, in temporary form. The children begin to grasp the important principle that the written words are symbols of their oral words. Once the children understand this they can attempt to read conventional materials (Seymour, Feb. 1973, p. 64).

Ms. Seymour adds another dimension to the neutralization technique. She advocates neutralizing the grammatical framework by changing it to a reading exercise.

Example: Instead of asking the child to choose between work

and works in this sentence: "my big brother (work, works) in that store," she would change it to "My big brother (works, wakes) in that store." The latter is a reading exercise for the child, whereas the former was one in the selection of standard versus nonstandard grammar.

Thus neutralization of beginning reading materials involves the avoidance of forms that are very different in the two dialects, standard and nonstandard; the retention of some standard forms, particularly verbs and plurals; and devising exercises which contrast correct and incorrect standard forms, not standard versus nonstandard.

Learning to read while learning the Standard:

Craig (1967, p. 133), working at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, advocates procedures frowned upon by others such as Goodman. (See footnote 9 in this paper.) Craig's work is presented here because it appears to be a more formalized, systematic version of Beryl Bailey's suggestions (1970, p. 2), and because it is actually being carried out in Jamaica with seven-year-old rural children.

Craig presents the following "model of procedures" (1967, pp. 133-140):

1. The speech of the children in both formal and informal situations is recorded and studied. (A formal situation might involve having children, individually or in small groups, talk with an interviewer about a given picture.)

2. Analysis of the recorded speech samples usually reveals that the patterns of the standard language may be classified as follows relative to the nonstandard speaker:

Class A. Patterns common to both Standard and nonstandard

and therefore within the productive competence of the child.

Class B. Patterns not usually produced by the child but known to him and produced under stress in prestige social situations. (Example: a child may say gonna for going to, but can produce going to if he thinks it is "more polite," or that he is being judged.)

Class C. Patterns which the child would recognize and comprehend when used by other speakers, but which he himself cannot produce.

Class D. Patterns totally unknown to the child.

3. From such analysis and classification the teacher determines what the child's linguistic needs are, that is, which aspects of the teaching must utilize foreign language techniques such as pattern drills and which aspects need modified foreign language and native language techniques.

4. The foreign language approach is used for class D, and to some extent for class C. Classes A and B are approached through real or imagined social situations. The social situations are controlled in such a way that a few class C and D elements are also systematically included on a continuing basis.

5. THE TEACHER FOLLOWS UP THE ORAL WORK BY HAVING THE CHILDREN READ AND WRITE THE SPECIFIC PATTERNS BEING LEARNED; AND USES THE SPECIFIC PATTERNS BEING TAUGHT AS FREQUENTLY AS POSSIBLE IN OTHER AREAS OF

6. The child's dialect is not stifled, but is accepted in the classroom. As patterns of standard English are learned orally, in reading, and in writing the child is gradually led to substitute these patterns for his nonstandard in school and on formal occasions.

Thus in this step-by-step linguistically controlled situation the children learn to read almost coincidentally with learning to speak the Standard dialect. This is in apparent contradiction to Wolfram's admonition that it may not be possible to teach Standard to young children who are not using it outside of school (Fall 1970, p. 3).

According to Craig these are rural children from lower socio-economic levels as viewed within the context of Jamaican society. The writer admits that the sociocultural factors among speakers of nonstandard dialects in the United States may prevent the achievement of similar results. However, it is an approach worthy of consideration. It actually ignores the controversy over whether Black English is analogous to a foreign language or whether it differs from Standard merely in surface features, by analyzing the characteristics of each child's speech and determining the approach according to the findings.

Companion everyday talk and school talk stories:

Shuy and Laffey (1973, pp. 114-126) include a limited study performed by Lloyd Leaverton in a Chicago public school.

Each "story" for the introduction of reading to speakers of Black dialect in this particular class was written in a modified Black English and also in Standard. By "modified" in this case is meant that only the Black English verb structure and forms were used; vocabulary and most of the syntax were that of Standard. So that it might be more meaningful to the children, the story versions using Black English verbs were called Everyday talk; the versions using the Standard were referred to as School talk.

Examples:	Everyday talk	School talk
Unit One (or Story one)	Employs verb got	Introduces verb have
Unit Two (or Story two)	Absence of is & are	Introduces is & are
Unit Three (or Story three)	Absence of 3rd person singular ending s	Introduces verb ending s
Unit Four (or Story four)	Absence of ed ending	Introduces ed ending
Unit Five (or Story five)	Employs use of do for 3rd person singular	Introduces does
Unit Six (or Story six)	Employs use of be where Standard uses am, is & are	Introduces am, is &
Unit Seven (or Story seven)	Employs he be, we be & they be	Introduces he is, we are, & they are

Salient points of the study follow:

1. Verb forms were the focus since this is the most socially stigmatized aspect of the Black English dialect. No attempt was made to change the pronunciation of the children.

2. At no time did the teacher deprecate the children's dialect; but rather, made it clear that they were dealing with two different

ways of expressing something.

3. The teacher had to be familiar with the children's dialect in order to prepare the two versions of the materials.

4. The questions being investigated were:

   a. Will learning to read be facilitated if the primary reading material is phrased in actual word patterns and grammatical structure used by the children in their oral language?

   b. Will learning the same story rephrased in Standard be facilitated if the children have first learned to read it in language closer to their everyday speech?

5. The class was divided at random into an Experimental and a Control group.

6. The Experimental group learned to read the "Everyday talk" version of each story first; then they were given the "School talk" version. The control group was given only the Standard version of each story each time.

7. The evidence seemed to favor the Experimental group in each case, that is, those who first learned the "Everyday talk" version learned to read that version and the "School talk" version in less time than those who tackled only the "School talk" version. The dialect approach was especially effective with boys who scored in the lowest quartile on the reading readiness test administered at the beginning of first grade.

8. The researcher warns that this was an extremely limited study and should be replicated. He also points out that possibly the most significant value of this strategy in dealing with non-standard dialect lies in the influence it has on the attitude and behavior of the teacher toward the children's oral language. The traditional approaches to reading and oral language programs have for the most part not considered the possible negative effects of constant criticism and correction of the child's nonstandard speech patterns.

This writer sees in this approach a reasonable utilization of the child's strengths. It also appears to avoid reinforcement of the nonstandard in ways which the Black community may disapprove. The fact that the Standard version of the materials is presented on the heels of the Nonstandard may render this approach more palatable to the critics of the use of dialect materials. The principle of using the childs' way of speaking may be salvaged in this context. The researcher reported that the children were told that they were learning to read "two ways," and that this was a significant motivating factor.

This approach would not formalize the nonstandard stories into full-fledged readers, as advocated by Baratz and Stewart (Baratz, 1969).

The solution may be in a combination of strategies. Wolfram

SUMMARY OF APPROACHES TO INITIAL READING for Bidialectal Children*

APPROACHES	Investigator(s)
Dialect readers with some Standard features	Baratz; Stewart (1969)
Prior teaching of oral standard; combine with reading	Bailey (1970; Venezky (1970)
Dialect reading of extant materials (read the way they speak)	Goodman (1969)
"Neutralized" dialect materials	Shuy (1969); Seymour (1973)
Experience Charts with temporary neutralization	Seymour (1973)
Combined foreign language/native language approach Teaching standard oral patterns followed by reading of those patterns (based on recordings of each child's speech)	Craig (1967)
Companion "Everyday talk" and "School talk" stories	Shuy & Laffey -- Leaverton (1973)
Combine: dialect reading of extant materials, neutralization, and dialect materials	Wolfram (Fall 1970)

NOTE: It is assumed that the practice of constantly "correcting" the child's nonstandard speech in order to get him to "read correctly" is not a valid alternative. According to a number of investigators, this is the most common approach!

*This summary does not deal with approaches to initial reading for bilingual children but only for those who speak a variety of the same language.

(Fall 1970) takes this position, recommending that dialect reading of extant materials, neutralizing of texts, and some dialect materials be tried. A summary of approaches follows.

CONCLUSIONS

The writer set out to investigate bidialectalism and its relationship to bilingualism and to the teaching of beginning reading. The following conclusions appear to be warranted.

1. Psycholinguistically bilingualism and bidialectalism are part of the same phenomenon. Sociolinguistically, however, they must be viewed from a different perspective. They cannot be approached in the same manner though there is some overlap.

2. With regard to the bidialectal child (or the potentially bidialectal child) psycholinguistic needs are in conflict with sociolinguistic realities. Programs in bidialectal education analogous to those in bilingual education do not exist because various aspects of nonstandard dialects are stigmatized by society. Hence parents do not wish these patterns reinforced at school, even though most advocates of the "dialect approach" to reading stress that it would be used only as a bridge to literacy in the very beginning stages of learning to read.

3. The advocates of dialect readers for speakers of Black English tend to view Black English as sufficiently different from Standard as to require some aspects of a foreign language approach.

4. Another group of scholars tend to place Black English in the same category as other nonstandard varieties of English such as Appalachian white. They point out that the American child who enters school speaking a nonstandard

dialect usually possesses a large degree of receptive competence in Standard. It is through this receptive competence that reading in Standard should be approached with the bidialectal child, according to this school of thought.

5. Since current linguistic knowledge indicates that it is far wiser to work within certain aspects of what the child does know, the reading profession is seeking ways to take advantage of the child's language by:

   a. accepting (not correcting) the variety of English the child speaks.

   b. re-structuring beginning reading materials in order to minimize conflicts between the child's language and the language in the reading material. (Not going so far as dialect readers, however.)

6. The extent to which the problem of mismatch contributes to reading failure is a hypothesis which needs more experimental study. Empirical evidence seems to corroborate the notion that a large degree of mismatch does make it more difficult for the small child to understand that the marks he sees on the paper relate to the sounds that come out of people's mouths.

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

This writer recommends to the reading profession that the following considerations be added to their current efforts:

1. Greater individualization in the approach to beginning reading, because each child manifests a different degree and type of mismatch.

2. As part of the readiness program in a school the informal speech of each child should be recorded and analyzed to determine the degree and type of mismatch between his/her speech and the standard language. This phase might be carried out during the kindergarten year so that each child's first grade program could be tailored to needs.

3. Training programs for elementary school teachers and for specialist reading teachers should add the following components:

   a. Some training in the dialects of American English. The teacher should possess at least receptive competence in some of these dialects, particularly Black English.

   b. Acquaintance with the field of sociolinguistics and its attitude toward language varieties, in order to impart to the teacher greater sophistication in these matters. For example, the teacher should know when not to teach useless distinctions if these distinctions are not in the child's dialect (e.g., pin, pen). Such distinctions are not directly related to learning to read per se. They may come later in the refinement process.

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c. Training in a variety of techniques including, some of those used in foreign language teaching, such as drilling oral patterns. Thus different techniques would be needed to deal with a child whose language closely resembles that of the reader and a child whose language is that of the inner city.

d. Training programs should produce teachers who:

- view nonstandard dialects as linguistic phenomena and not as a social stigma
- know how to use whatever talents the child brings to school
- know how to diagnose what is needed
- have some concept of anthropological relativity.

4. The use of recorded materials in which the child follows in the text and reads with as he listens.

The thoughts of Richard Light (1971) seem apropos in setting the topic of this investigation in perspective:

> If our society could believe, and if our schools would teach, that diversity is not to be feared or suspected, but valued and enjoyed, we would be well on the way to solving some critical national problems, including those problems faced daily by minority children in our schools.

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APPENDIX

SOME DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF BLACK ENGLISH

Points to Remember

African American Negroes - Still used in the 70's

1. Not all ~~Negroes~~ speak Black English
2. Its usage varies along several dimensions in the Black community
3. Dialect differences are affected by:
   a. social status
   b. sex differences
   c. age differences (e.g., teenage language style)
   d. racial or class isolation (e.g., Black ghetto or Appalachia)
   e. peer influences among the young
4. Some features fluctuate between non-standard and standard-like forms. Speakers of Black English (or any other nonstandard dialect) do not use nonstandard forms exclusively.
5. Many middle class Black persons, who use Standard most of the time, are able to switch to Black English when they find it necessary or desirable. In this context they are bidialectal.
6. From time to time, speakers of the standard dialect adopt some of the more colorful vocabulary, language style, or structure of a particular nonstandard. Examples from Black English: Right on; uptight; no way; rapping: (a fluent and lively way of talking characterized by a high degree of personal style.)
7. Some features of nonstandard dialects are more stigmatized by the society than others. (Example: third person singular present tense: Standard uses -- s, while Black English has no -s-- he sees -- he see)

The above points and the description which follows have been excerpted from Some Illustrative Features of Black English, a mimeographed paper by Walt Wolfram, February 1970; Black English by Dillard; and Teaching Standard English in the Inner City by Fasold & Shuy. (SEE BIBLIOGRAPHY for all of these works.)

I. PRONUNCIATION (Phonology)

A. Word-final consonant blends)

1. Final member of cluster absent in Black English:

Examples: (called reduced clusters)

a. test -- tes'
desk -- des'
hand -- han'
build -- buil'

Such pairs as build and bill; coal and cold; west and Wes have similar pronunciation in Black English.

b. ed -- suffix denoting past tense. When addition of this suffix produces a voiced or voiceless consonant cluster, final member of cluster is absent. (voiced --vocal cords vibrating)
(voiceless -- vocal cords not vibrating)

Example of voiced: moved
Example of voiceless: finished - (finisht in Standard)

In Black English the past tense is move' and finish'. Words like belt, count, ending in one of each kind of consonant, do not have reduced cluster.

Reduction (bes' for best) also occurs regularly in Standard English only when words which follow begin with a consonant. E.g., wes' side, col' cuts, bes' kind.

c. plurals

Words ending in s, p, t, or k add -- es to plural

instead of s as in Standard. E. g., des' (desk) desses (desks); ghos' (ghost) ghoses (ghosts)

B. th - sounds

Standard: th as in then
th as in thin

Black English: At beginning of a word: d or t

then -- den (voiced th)
thin -- tin (voiceless th)
th followed by r -- maybe pronounced as f
(throat -- froat)

Black English -- th within a word: f or v
voiceless -- th rendered as f: Nothing-Nuf'n
voiced -- th rendered as v: brother-bruvah

Black English: at the end of a word: f or v
E. g., Ruth -- Ruf
Next to nasal n: month -- mon'

C. l and r (These variations less stigmatized than other features)

1. Black English and southern white Standard:

when following a vowel: Rendered as "uh"

e. g., steal -- steuh; sister -- sistah

When preceding a consonant: no vestiage of sound

Some speakers: e. g., help -- hep; wart -- wot

2. Black English: r following vowels o or u

e. g., dor -- do'; four -- fo'; sure -- sho'

3. Black English: "merger" of their into they and your into you; will into 'll, then lost completely, thus be is indicator of future in: I be there tomorrow. Contracted form 'll was lost.

4. Black English: After initial consonants: r may be absent:

e. g., throw -- th'ow; through -- th'ough

5. Black English: In unstressed syllables r may be absent

e. g., protect -- p'otect; reliable -- 'liable

D. b, d, g in final position, syllable or word:

change to p, t, k (devoicing) e.g., pig -- pick, bud -- butt; cab -- cap

E. Nasalization

1. Black English and other nonstandard dialects -- ing ending - in

e.g., coming -- comin'

2. nasalized vowels -- "man, bun, bum"

F. Indefinite articles

Black English: article a used regardless of following word.

e.g., a boy; a animal

G. Ask

Black English -- Ax (preserved Old English pronunciation. Also in Appalachia)

II. GRAMMAR (Morphology and Syntax)

verb system
negation
noun suffixes
question formation
pronouns

spoken and written forms

A. Verb System

1. --ed suffix (see PRONUNCIATION, A-1-b)

2. Perfect tenses -- Aspectual contrasts

a. Present Perfect -- same as Standard (I have carried)
1. omission of 've contraction:
they've gone -- they gone or
's contraction
He's gone -- He gone

b. Past Perfect -- same as Standard (I had carried)

c. Completive Aspect
I done walked -- Nonexistent in Standard

d. Distant past -- remote time
I been walked -- Nonexistent in Standard

Emphasis on total completion of an action.

3. Past Participle -- existence as grammatical form in Black English not clear

   a. Standard past form used for simple past and for compound tenses.
   He came; he have came

   b. Standard past participle for both.
   He taken it; he have taken it

4. Third person singular, present tense

   a. suffix s or es nonexistent
   he sees -- he see
   he has -- he have

5. "Hypercorrect" Forms
   I walks, they walks, etc.

   → Not part of Black English
   → Result of imperfect learning of Standard
   → Absence of s in third singular present (he walk) follows rules of the dialect

6. To Be

   a. Invariant be (use of be in any person, singular or plural)
   (He, they, I) be here this afternoon.

      1. Result of elimination of contraction 'll representing future. He'll, they'll, I'll be here. . . hence, future.

      2. Result of elimination of 'd (contracted form of would)
      He'd, they'd, I'd be there if I could, hence, conditional.

      3. Distributive -- non-tense be

         a. object or event distributed intermittently in time.

         b. Contrasts with am, is, are; not a substitute for am, is, are in this usage.

         Sometime he be there sometime he don't (be).

         Contrast: He workin' (now, this moment)
         He be workin' (from time to time)

c. Absence of Forms of to be

1. Absence of copula -- result of elimination of contracted forms: 'm (I'm), 's (he's), 're (they're) I'm sick -- I sick

2. Are-less common than is because of r sound rendered as ah -- uh -- none

3. Agreement

a. some lack of person -- number agreement

b. was-usually exclusive past tense for every person: they was there; we was there.

4. Ain't

a. As negative form of is, are, am, have, has

b. Also instead of Standard, didn't
Example: He ain't touch me for He didn't touch me.

c. In multiple negotion:
E. g., He ain't go nowhere for He didn't go anywhere.

B. Multiple Negation

1. He ain't do nothing to nobody

2. He don't hardly come to see us no more.

3. Can't nobody do it; Didn't no dog bite him.

C. Noun Suffixes

1. Possessive
's indicated by order of words in Black English
Example: The boy's hat -- the boy hat

a. "mines" for mine

2. Plural

a. Absence of plural suffix (s or es)
E. g., He took five book (only in some areas)

b. Regular plural with irregular nouns.
Example: foots, deers, childrens, peoples, mens

D. Inversion (question formation) used in both direct and indirect discourse

Example: Where did he go?
Black English: I want to know where did he go.
Standard: I want to know where he went. (I wanna know, usually in Standard and nonstandard)

E. Pronouns

1. Pronominal apposition
E. g., my brother, he.....
that teacher, she....

2. Existential "It"
E. g., There's a boy in my room ----
Black English: It's a boy in my room.

III. VOCABULARY (LEXICON)

1. Black English and Standard have a very large number of vocabulary items in common.

2. The slang of Black English and Standard differs. The teens and pre-teens are usually the greatest language innovators.

3. Some vocabulary differences between the two stem from regional (geographic) variations.

4. There are ways in which the lexical structure of Black English does differ.

Examples:

a. he informed them to give the names of everyone present.
Standard -- .... instructed them to.....

b. borrow in some contexts is a reciprocal verb (it covers both to lend and borrow; Spanish verb prestar is similar)

c. learn may be reciprocal, meaning to teach as well as learn in Black English and certain white non-standard dialects.

5. A dictionary should be prepared containing words whose meanings do differ in Black and Standard English.

The above vocabulary generalizations have been gleaned from Black English by Dillard, Chapter VI, p. 229. See Bibliography.